(ii) Commission to societies at 1% of MSP;

(iii) Payment of cost towards transportation of gunnies from rail heads to procurement centres; and

(iv) Enhancement of milling rate of parboiled rice from Rs. 15 per quintal to Rs. 20 per quintal.

This has helped in enhanced procurement of paddy/rice in KMS 2004-05 in the States undertaking Decentralized procuremennt compared to KMS 2003-04.

(c) As per the other recommendations of the Conference of States Food Minister, all the State Government/UT Administrations have been instructed to ensure that all families at the risk of hunger including migrant labour/displaced persons/homeless population are issued ration entitlement authority slips; priority is given to Cooperatives of women and Ex-servicemen in the matter of alloting Fair Price Shops; priority is given in the alloting of Fair Price Shops to the legal heirs of a Fair Price licensing publicizing the information about the scale of issue, the price of foodgrains, availability, etc.

Diversion of foodgrain meant for BPL familes

† 3906. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI;

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Department of Programme Evaluation under Planning Commission has found that 50 per cent of the foodgrains supplied for people below poverty line has been sold elsewhere during 2003-04;

(b) if so, the fact in this regard and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) whether steps have been taken by Government to plug the said loophole during 2004-05 and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

SINGH): (a) to (c) As informed by the Planning Commission an evaluation study was conducted by the Programme Evaluation Organization of the Planning Commission on the performance of TPDS. The study covered 60 districts, 88 blocks, 16 towns, 176 village panchayats, 240 fair price shops and 3600 households spread voer 18 States. According to the study during 2003-04, the 16 large States were issued 14.07 million tones of BPL quota from the Central Pool. Of this, around 5.93 million tones was delivered to the BPL families and 8.14 million tones intended for them never reached them.

The Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments wherein the Central Government is responsible for procurement of foodgrains, storage and their transportation upto the Principal Distribution Centres of FCI and the State Governments are responsible for identification of beneficiaries, issue them ration cards and distribute foodgrains through a vast network of 4.77 lakh Fair Price Shops scattered all over the country. The reform of the Public Distribution System to improve its efficiency, accountability and effectiveness is an ongoing process. Besides, notification of the Public Distribution System (Control) order, 2001, involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, model citizen's charter and deputation of task force teams to check irregularities and to inspect and monitor the TPDS and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Conferences of State Food Secretaries, State Food Ministers and a meeting with all the Members of Parliament was organized recently to discuss issues relating to strengthening of TPDS.

Introducing minimum retail price

3907. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would introduce the insertion of Minimum Retail price instead of Maximum Retail Price on each product for sale in the market in the interest of customers;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(o) whether Government would direct the big companies like Hindustan Lever Limtied, etc., to avoid advertisement charges and stop issuing non-usable items on sale of their standard products thus reducing the cost of their products and benefiting the purchaser; and